RICE UNIVERSITY

Art & Activism:
Critical Study of Hope in Times of Crisis
SOCI/ANTH 376

Dreamers Protest in Downtown Houston (November, 2015); Photo taken by Luis Afable, Houston in Motion Project

Spring 2016, Tuesday & Thursday: 10:50-12:05
Instructor: Dr. Yehuda Sharim, 322 Rayzor, Rayzor Hall
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This course explores art and social change in times of mass displacement, racial oppression, and war. Focusing on migrant narratives in Houston, our class surveys the efforts involved in cultivating hope, shaping new models of leadership, cultivating engaged scholarship, gaining agency as students and citizens, and the possible implications of remaining historically mute and hopeless. The class will host contemporary activists, community leaders, UN officials, and artists concerned with radical visions of hope in Houston.

The cultural and political dimensions of documented and undocumented narratives of migration in the city of Houston and the USA at large will serve as our central case study. Exploring "voices unheard" of this acts of border crossing, particularly by diverse refugee communities, we will focus on alternative cultural, sociological, and political dimension of this contemporary dispute. Our goal will not be to establish a master narrative about this topic. Rather, we will engage in a critical driven analysis of the complexity of displacement, considering the multiple issues, politics, and human lives that are at stake.

Our archive draws on readings from sociology, anthropology, history, comparative migration studies, race and ethnic studies, cultural studies, feminist of color studies, and gender studies. Writers include, bell hooks, Howard Zinn, Lynn Hunt, Peter Gatrell, James Baldwin, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, June Jordan, and Claudia Rankine, to name a few.

Guest speakers include:

- Carolina Ramirez and Karla De Jesus – United We Dream, Houston
- Alia Al-Khatar-Williams – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Ghulam Kehar – Amaanah (non-profit) Refugee Services
- Wafa Abdin – Catholic Charities, Refugee Resettlement Agencies in Houston
- Local Community leaders: Andre Shongo (Pastor of the Congolese community in Houston), Angel Silwan (activist, Iraqi community in Houston), Dr. Mahmud Abbas (leader, Syrian-Kurdish community in Houston), and Haider Elias (leader and founder of Yazda organization, the Yazidi-Kurdish community in Houston)
- Poets and Painters: Irene Lara Silva, Avin Abbas, Hussein Ali Hasan, and Lorena Alvarado
- Musicians: The Congolese Gospel Choir, Arvin Kaiantari (Bahai-Persian community), and Dahan Baraily (Bhutanese community)